

become, the fewer of our troops are necessary to assist them in that effort. But it does not help them to cause them to question whether we are going to provide the financial support for our troops and for the training of Iraqi military and police forces. But that is exactly what the Senate is doing today by blocking this unanimous consent request.

Many of my colleagues on the other side of the aisle, still now, are left to claim that the lack of Iraqi political reconciliation is the reason they are dissatisfied with the outcome in Iraq, having lost the argument by the improved security arrangements as a result of the surge and the counterinsurgency strategy of General Petraeus.

I have to wonder whether we are holding the Iraqi Government—Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent for 2 more minutes.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, by now moving the goalposts, saying first the surge would not work to now having to declare the obvious, that the surge is working and the military situation is better, our colleagues on the other side of the aisle and the naysayers are saying: Well, really the problem is a lack of political reconciliation. But I have to ask whether we—a Congress that has proven itself to be dysfunctional over the last 8 months or 11 months now—whether we are holding the Iraqis to a different standard than we would actually hold ourselves to. We have not exactly been a model for how Congresses should function.

I think it is unfair for us to continue to move the goalposts and say that the significant reconciliation efforts that are occurring in tribal areas, in the provinces, and local areas do not count because clearly they do count, with things like the Anbar awakening and the work being done around Iraq now from the bottom up, as opposed to the top down, which is helping to make for a more secure Iraq, and making sure that Iraqis, rather than Americans, are principally responsible for maintaining security and safety in Iraq, in conjunction with American military troops.

I am discouraged and disappointed that our colleagues have blocked this emergency funding for our troops, putting 100,000 civilian employees of the Department of Defense in doubt during this Christmas season as to whether they are actually going to have a job come February and causing our troops to question our commitment to support them during a time of war. That is not the message this Senate ought to be sending, and I urge my colleagues to reconsider.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from South Carolina.

Mr. GRAHAM. Mr. President, is it my understanding I am recognized for 15 minutes. Is that correct?

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Fifteen minutes, without objection.

Mr. GRAHAM. Thank you, Mr. President.

IRAQ

Mr. GRAHAM. Mr. President, to start this discussion about what to do in Iraq, I think we need to sort of take inventory of where we are, what common ground we do have. I do believe there is a vast, wide, and deep support for the men and women in the military by the average Republican and Democrat and Independent citizen and Members of Congress, and that is indeed good news for our country. It is not one of those situations where people came back from Vietnam and were not well received by their fellow citizens. For that, we should all be grateful.

I would like to put this debate in a little different context. As my colleague from Texas said, whether we should have gone into Iraq is sort of a matter for historical discussion. The question for us as a nation is winning and losing, and can you put Iraq in terms of winning and losing? I think you have to because our enemy has. Our enemy, al-Qaida and other extremists groups, looks at Iraq very much as a battlefield and a battle they want to win and us to lose. That is why bin Laden has rallied the jihadist and al-Qaida sympathizers to go to Iraq and go to the Land of the Two Rivers and drive the infidel out, because I think they understand pretty clearly that if Iraq can reconcile itself, become a stable, functioning democracy, with an Iraqi spin to it, where a woman can have a say about her children, where the rule of law would reign over the rule of the gun, and be a place that would absorb religious tolerance, it would be a nightmare for their agenda. So our enemy is very certain in their own mind about what would happen if we won in Iraq.

Again, winning to me would be a stable, functioning democracy, tolerant of religious differences, where all groups would have a political say, where a woman would have a meaningful role in society regarding her children and their future. And it would contain Iran. It would be a buffer to Iranian ambitions. It would deny extremist groups, such as al-Qaida, safe haven. That, to me, is winning, and that, to me, is very possible. The reason I say it is very possible is because it is in the best interests of the Iraqi people themselves to achieve that goal. There is a Shia majority in Iraq, but they are Iraqi Shia. They are Arabs. The Persian Shia majority—there has been a war between these two countries in the past decades and a lot of animosity. So the general feeling on the streets that I have found from many visits to Iraq is that, generally speaking, the Iraqi population does not want to be dominated by anybody, including Iran.

Now, the biggest news of the surge that is not being reported enough, in

my opinion, is that given a choice and an opportunity, a Muslim population, the Iraqi Sunni Arabs, rejected the al-Qaida agenda in Anbar. The al-Qaida movement in Iraq was formulated and inspired by outside forces. Leaders from al-Qaida internationally came into Iraq to rally people to the al-Qaida cause. They played a very heavy hand in Anbar, which was brutal—from the small things such as banning smoking to burning children in front of their parents who did not cooperate. They imposed a way of living on the Iraqis in Anbar Province for which the Anbar Iraqi Sunni Arabs said: No, we don't want any more of this. And the sheiks and all the tribes came to our side because al-Qaida overplayed their hand. So the real good news for me is that given an opportunity and being reinforced, the al-Qaida agenda will not sell, and people within the region will turn it down and reject it. That would not have happened without the surge.

I think most of us do not appreciate what life is like in a country where if you raise your hand to be a judge, let's say, not only do you become personally at risk, they try to kill your family—the forces that do not want to reconcile Iraq.

Political debates and discourse in this country can be very contentious, but on occasion we find that middle ground to solve our problems. It is hard and difficult to compromise in an environment where the people who want you to fail literally will kill your family. So the lack of security in the past has been our biggest impediment to reconciliation. Thank God for General Petraeus, General Odino, and all under their command. You have done a wonderful job.

This we should all agree upon: that the surge, as a military operation, has been enormously successful and I think will be the gold standard in military history for counterinsurgency operations. Instead of bleeding it dry of funds and putting it at risk, we should reinforce it politically, monetarily, and in every other way.

A political leader can reinforce a military leader. Our military, because of our system of government, depends on us, those of us in elected office, to give them the resources to execute the mission they have been assigned. Who among us believes we understand Iraq better than General Petraeus militarily? Who among us advocated the surge as proposed by General Petraeus? Who among us understands counterinsurgency operations better than the general and his staff? None of us, if we would be honest with ourselves. He is the expert in this area. He has been given an ability to engage in military operations with a completely new theory, and it is working—undeniably working.

Security in Iraq is better. Anbar has literally been liberated. If you told me a year ago, this time last year, we would be moving marines out of Anbar because the security environment

would justify it, I would have thought: That is optimism beyond what I can muster. But it has happened. And all throughout this country called Iraq, people are beginning to reconcile themselves because of better security. Quite frankly, they are war weary.

But I am not going to reinvent history. The blame is across the board and across the aisle. How many times did Republicans go to Iraq after the fall of Baghdad, for maybe 3 years, and say: It is really going well, it is just the media's fault. It was not going well, and it was not the media's fault. The strategy was failing. So people on my side of the aisle were cheerleading for a strategy that, if we followed it, we would have been hopelessly lost in Iraq. So there is plenty of blame to go around. Finally, we now have adjusted. We have a new general with a new strategy. It is a lot more complicated than just 30,000 new troops. We are deploying them differently. We are going after the insurgency in a different way.

The biggest nightmare for al-Qaida has been the surge. If you ask to pick winners and losers of the surge, it would be extremist groups. At the top of the list would be al-Qaida, and it is soon going to be the Shia militia aligned with Iran. There is an offensive about to take place in Iraq that is going to put the nail in the coffin of extremist groups. They are not defeated yet, but they are greatly diminished.

Now is not the time, colleagues, for us to put this surge in jeopardy. Our troops are in a political crossfire here at home. They are not in the middle of a heated sectarian war. Security does exist in Iraq now to get business done. There are extremist groups, and it is still dangerous, but the military has done its part to allow the Iraqi people to reconcile themselves.

We have not done our part. We are still fighting a battle as if nothing new has happened. We are still holding on to positions stated in April and May as if nothing has changed, and that is not fair to those who sacrificed to make it change. I took this floor for a very long time with Senator McCain and a handful of others arguing that the Department of Defense had a strategy doomed to fail. Thank God the President changed course. Thank God for General Petraeus and all under his command.

Now, to my colleagues on the other side, please let us allow General Petraeus to finish the job he started. Within a few months, the troops begin to come home based on the surge being successful. They will return with victory at hand. Victory is not yet achieved, but it is possible. The only way to roll back the security gains is to change the mission and have the Congress start running the war.

The political crossfire I speak of is that some people want to give the money to support the surge only if they get \$11 billion of domestic spending unrelated to the military. Some people will not give any money for the surge, continued operations in Iraq, un-

less we change the mission and withdraw troops by the end of the next year. That is a crossfire politically that is doing more harm than good that should end.

Beginning in March, General Petraeus will come back. He will tell us the situation as it exists on the ground. I am here to tell you, in December, that I am disappointed in the progress at the central government level in Baghdad. They have passed a budget in Iraq—\$48 billion. All revenue being shared among all groups is a great step forward, but it is not a permanent solution to the problem.

We need a permanent law, a national law, that will tell every group in Iraq: As to the wealth of the country, part of it will come to your area, and you do not have to worry about it budget by budget. Political reconciliation in Iraq has to happen for the surge to be successful. I have said on numerous occasions that if there is not some major breakthrough on the benchmarks by January, I will look at reconfiguring the aid we give to the Iraqi Government, not changing the troop missions or the troop numbers. I am going to leave that up to the military. It is in our national security interest to maintain the gains we have achieved on the ground to keep Iraq from going into chaos. But we are giving this Government hundreds of millions of dollars of aid, and if they cannot reconcile themselves, we may find other places to spend that money and other ways to spend that money.

So I urge my colleagues to allow the troop funding that is required to complete the surge, to allow it to go forward. Stop this political crossfire of trying to extract from this necessary funding event more money to spend domestically here at home or trying to take the mission away from the military commanders. That is not where our troops need to find themselves in this crucial moment in time.

I can promise you, as we go into next year, if the central government in Baghdad has not done a better job reconciling themselves, I will sit down with anyone, Republicans and Democrats alike, to find a way to put political pressure, economic pressure, on this government.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. TESTER). The Senator from Arkansas is recognized.

CONSUMER PRODUCT SAFETY COMMISSION

Mr. PRYOR. Mr. President, I want to acknowledge my colleagues who have been helping on S. 2045. These are in alphabetical order, not in the order of work done. Everybody has worked a lot on different parts of this bill. They are Senators BROWN, CASEY, DURBIN, HARKIN, INOUE, KLOBUCHAR, MENENDEZ, BILL NELSON, and SCHUMER. They have all helped craft this legislation relating to the Consumer Product Safety Commission.

Because we are now in the holiday season, naturally, public attention is focused on consumer product safety. I had come today prepared to ask unanimous consent to try to move to this legislation. However, last week, Thursday, I met with Al Hubbard at the White House in a very constructive meeting to talk about some of the areas of disagreement on the legislation, as it came out of the Senate Commerce Committee. It was a very constructive meeting, very frankly. I hope, in the end, we will consider that a very productive meeting. We don't know yet if there is a meeting of the minds, but I am cautiously optimistic that the White House is starting to engage in this very important issue to this country and to the families of America.

Let's talk for a moment about the Consumer Product Safety Commission. For a lot of people, the CPSC is just one of these "alphabet soup" agencies, and they don't know what the CPSC does. But I will tell you, it touches every American's life every day. It is in the small things that we use, such as batteries, coffeemakers, lawnmowers, toys, and baby cribs.

The Consumer Product Safety Commission is there to make sure these products are safe for people in my State of Arkansas to buy and for people all over this country to buy and use. One of the things the Consumer Product Safety Commission should do is give people in this country—including parents, when it comes to toys—peace of mind to know the toys they purchase and other products they purchase meet American safety standards.

This bill we are talking about today, S. 2045, was called recently by the Wall Street Journal "the most significant consumer safety legislation in a generation." I think that accurately sums up the nature of our legislation. It is consumer safety reform legislation. It is very significant, very comprehensive.

Our efforts in reforming the CPSC predate a lot of the recalls we heard about this summer. We have been working on this all year in the subcommittee. Basically, the CPSC now looks after 15,000 separate consumer products. Every year, there are about, roughly, 27,000 deaths in this country caused by consumer products that are faulty. There are 33.1 million people injured every year through consumer products that the CPSC regulates. So this is an agency that is a public safety agency, a good Government agency.

Unfortunately, the CPSC is completely overwhelmed today. I believe the Senate, the House, and the President should all work together to reauthorize this agency and put it back together again.

Let me give some examples from this year alone. This year there have been 37 million products recalled. Some people may say: Gosh, it is working because all these products have been recalled. First, a lot of those products should never have been imported in the